

TEEN SUBSTANCE USE

Use of addictive substances—tobacco/nicotine, alcohol and other drugs during adolescence interferes with brain development, reduces academic performance and increases the risk of accidents, homicides, suicides and serious health conditions, including addiction. Teens and young adults are more inclined than adults to take risks, including smoking, drinking or using other drugs. Use of any addictive substance while the brain is still developing increases the chances of future use of that and other addictive substances.

THE EARLIER AN INDIVIDUAL STARTS SMOKING, DRINKING OR USING OTHER DRUGS, THE GREATER THE LIKELIHOOD OF DEVELOPING ADDICTION:

- 9 out of 10 people with addiction involving nicotine alcohol or other drugs began using these substances before they were 18
- People who began using addictive substances before age 15 are nearly 7 times likelier to become addicted than those who delay first use until age 21 or older
- Every year that substance use is delayed during brain development, the risk of addiction decreases

WARNING SIGNS OF TEEN SUBSTANCE USE

Certain symptoms and behaviors are warning signs for substance use in teens, although they may also indicate other problems, such as depression. Warning signs can include:

- Alcohol, smoke or other chemical odors on your child's or their friends' breath or clothing
- Obvious intoxication, dizziness or bizarre behavior
- Changes in dress and grooming
- Changes in choice of friends
- Frequent arguments, sudden mood changes and unexplained violent actions
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- Sudden weight gain or loss
- Loss of interest in usual activities or hobbies
- School problems such as declining or failing grades, poor attendance and recent discipline problems
- Trauma or frequent injuries
- Runaway and delinquent behavior
- Depressed mood or talk about depression or suicide; suicide attempts

WHAT CAN A PARENT DO ABOUT SUSPECTED DRUG USE?

- Stay calm, don't accuse your child or let your anger get the best of you.
- Ask your child whether he or she is taking drugs.
- Be open and ready to receive the information that your child will give you. Make it clear how you feel about drugs. Establish a zero tolerance for drug use and set clear expectations.
- If you need help, contact your child's school counselor or pediatrician. You may also call the National Clearing house for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-788-2880 or visit the web site www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov for drug abuse prevention information and a listing of the treatment centers closest to you.

Source: CASAColumbia - Addiction Science, Prevention & Treatment Research

For more information call Prevention Services Coordinator Jessica Wildfong at 781-275-7727 ext. 262 or email at jessicaw@bedfordma.gov